

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 52

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 110

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 52—Relative to the Orbiter Atlantis.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 16, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 52, Sharon Runner. Orbiter Atlantis: retirement.

This measure would request the President and the Congress of the United States and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to retire the Orbiter Atlantis to Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale, California, its place of origin for eventual public display at a designated museum to inspire and educate people for years to come about the many achievements of NASA's Space Shuttle Program.

WHEREAS, Atlantis, the fourth orbiter to become operational at Kennedy Space Center (KSC), was named after the primary research vessel for the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts from 1930 to 1966. The two-masted, 460-ton ketch was the first United States vessel to be used for oceanographic research; and

WHEREAS, The Space Shuttle Atlantis has carried on the spirit of the sailing vessel with 21 space flights of its own, including the Galileo planetary explorer mission in 1989 and the deployment of the Arthur Holley Compton Gamma Ray Observatory in 1991. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has announced its intentions to standdown or inactivate the Orbiter Atlantis following mission STS-126, which is presently scheduled for April 2008; and

WHEREAS, Palmdale, California is where all the orbiters, Enterprise through Endeavour, were assembled and tested, including Atlantis, which was delivered for service to NASA in April 1985. The Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale has performed the maintenance and modernization for all of the orbiters (Orbiter Maintenance Down Period (OMDP)) through 2001 when that effort was transitioned to KSC; and

WHEREAS, Atlantis benefitted from lessons learned in the construction and testing of Enterprise, Columbia and Challenger. At rollout, its weight was some 6,974 pounds less than Columbia. The experience gained during the Orbiter assembly process also enabled Atlantis to be completed with a 49.5 percent reduction in man-hours (compared to Columbia). Much of this decrease can be attributed to the greater use of thermal protection blankets on the upper orbiter body instead of tiles; and

WHEREAS, Atlantis was shipped to Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale, California to undergo upgrades and modifications. These modifications included a drag chute, new plumbing lines that configured the orbiter for

extended duration, more than 800 new heat protection tiles and blankets and new insulation for the main landing gear doors, and structural mods to the Atlantis airframe. Altogether, 165 modifications were made to Atlantis over the 20 months it spent in Palmdale, California; and

WHEREAS, The Air Force Plant 42 continues to support the Space Shuttle Program with hardware fabrication and repair, although the workload has been diminishing each year. The people and facility there are certified for human-rated spaceflight hardware, tooling, and support equipment for both the Space Shuttle Program and the International Space Station; and

WHEREAS, Retiring Atlantis in Palmdale will support the facility's project "Vision for Space Exploration." It will free an OPF (Orbiter Processing Facility) for NASA's Exploration Mission Directorate, provide for a dedicated and focused workforce within ground operations at KSC to maintain and process Discovery and Endeavour to fly out the remainder of the Space Shuttle Program safely, and help to stabilize the small Space Shuttle workforce at Air Force Plant 42 in Palmdale to be able to provide optimal preplanned as well as emergent support to the program through fly-out and termination; and

WHEREAS, The Air Force Plant 42 and its workers will also help to preserve and prepare the Orbiter Atlantis for eventual transfer to its designated public display location once it is placed on loan and declared surplus and donated by NASA to a museum or science center by NASA; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature of the State of California respectfully requests the President and Congress of the United States and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to retire the Orbiter Atlantis to Palmdale, California, its place of origin for eventual public display at a designated museum to inspire and educate people for years to come about the many achievements of NASA's Space Shuttle Program; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly and the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States, the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and to the author for appropriate distribution.

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